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INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM COS SCOTT AFB IL
RHMFISS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0068
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0246
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0239
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000575

SIPDIS

US TRANSCOM FOR KATHY JOHNSON-CASARES AND TIMOTHY PEPLAW
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/04/24

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: SCENE SETTER FOR US TRANSCOM COMMANDER GENERAL MCNABB

CLASSIFIED BY: Timothy P. Buckley, Second Secretary, Department of State, Political and Economic Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In the context of the roll out of the new strategy for Afghanistan and the signing of the exchange of letters on transit, your visit is an opportunity to reinforce the message that Afghanistan is a common endeavor in which the United States and Uzbekistan are partners. Although the Uzbek agreement on transit reflects a recognition of their own national interest in Afghanistan, our overall bilateral relationship remains delicate. Our message to the Uzbeks is that while our relationship continues to be multifaceted, we are prepared to engage with them in a pragmatic and constructive dialogue across the full range of issues. Afghanistan transit and the possible commercial cooperation associated with it can serve to build trust and strengthen this relationship. In the meantime, however, the GOU continues to view our intentions with a great deal of suspicion, a tendency that is amplified by Russia and the proclivity to view U.S. interests in the region through the nineteenth century lens of the Great Game. End Summary.

Afghanistan Transit

¶2. (C) Considering the state of our bilateral relationship with Uzbekistan several years ago, the signing of the agreement on the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) represents a major step forward on cooperation toward the shared goal of stabilizing Afghanistan; it also presents the opportunity to deepen engagement in the commercial realm. Indications are that the GOU is looking forward to this visit and to discussing opportunities for further cooperation, particularly relating to efforts to develop a logistics hub at Navoi Airport.

¶3. (C) The cargoes of the first two test rail shipments reached Afghanistan quickly and the recent air cargo delivery via Uzbekistan's nascent transportation hub at Navoi Airport has gone smoothly, with freight already moving through Afghanistan to Kandahar. Additionally, the GOU has responded affirmatively to your offer to host a cross-ministry group of GOU logistics experts to various TRANSCOM operational sites in the United States the week

of July 26, 2009, and expressed their appreciation for the offer. Approval of shipments since the April 3 signing of the NDN agreement has been slower than desired, but is still well within the thirty-day window that we agreed to in the exchange of letters. Our impression is that the GOU is still working out the kinks in its approval process and it is our hope that these authorizations will move more quickly going forward. All the same, it is in keeping with GOU practice in other areas to wait until the last minute to make a decision and it is possible they will routinely take the full 30 days.

Addressing Misinformation

14. (C) Central Asia is fertile ground for rumors and conspiracy theories. The Russian-language media that dominates this region eagerly propagates rumors and offers a substantial amplifying effect. One recent Russian television broadcast repeated a story that has been circulating for some time already alleging that the U.S. military is complicit in the narcotics trade in Afghanistan and is using Manas for this purpose. Meetings here will be an opportunity to assure the GOU that US airfields in Afghanistan are operationally secure and well-protected. Commercial-contract aircraft arrive safely every day, including Russian carriers and other global air cargo carriers.

Commercial Navoi-to-Afghanistan options

15. (C) The GOU's budding Navoi Transportation hub and adjacent Free TASHKENT 00000575 002 OF 002

Industrial-Economic Zone (FIEZ) is being followed very closely by the most senior levels of the GOU leadership. The GOU continues to pour money into this project, which benefits from critical advice and assistance from the South Korean logistics conglomerate Hanjin Group (and subsidiary Korean Air). The Navoi hub is mentioned specifically in the US-Uzbek Transit Agreement. However, currently there are GOU-imposed prohibitions on both aircraft freight-forwarding and truck-freight-forwarding from Navoi to Afghanistan, in that shipments must be trans-loaded from aircraft or rail at Navoi to truck for follow-on delivery to Afghanistan. Another trans-load is necessary at the Afghan port city of Hairaton. This is an opportunity to communicate to GOU leaders that such restrictions preclude the full use of Navoi as an air hub in support cargo transit to Afghanistan. Specifically, if US contract or other third party air cargo carriers were permitted to fly to Afghanistan from Navoi, USTRANSCOM could easily and immediately conduct six commercial air cargo landings a week by 747 freighters and arrange 12 follow-on air tender deliveries per week. USTRANSCOM does not need Navoi Airport to move supplies into Afghanistan; however, it can help provide an instant commercial customer base for this multi-model hub. In addition, the U.S. Government and USTRANSCOM can also help attract to Navoi other U.S. government contractors such as DHL, UPS and FEDEX. The Navoi hub concept will long outlast the Afghan stabilization effort; but during its initial development phase, USTRANSCOM could be a helpful business partner. The recent test air cargo shipment to Navoi required two trans-load operations, making Navoi a costly shipping option at this time. If this trans-load requirement and inability to flight-forward to Afghanistan remains, Navoi will be viable only for a very limited number of air cargo flights.

Local Procurement and CENTCOM J4 Command MG Dowd visit

16. (C) We are actively pursuing local purchase options in Uzbekistan, which we believe to be a key element for a long-term partnership with the Uzbeks in support of Afghanistan. The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade has been very forthcoming in helping the U.S. military logistics purchasers conduct a local market survey, and to conduct the recent successful USVETCOM food safe inspections of seven local foodstuff

and beverage producers. At present, all Central Asian countries including Azerbaijan are involved, but the effort is moving faster in Uzbekistan than anywhere else. As part of the local purchase endeavor, we suggest that you propose that MG Dowd, CCJ4 at USCENTCOM visit Uzbekistan in late June 2009 to view transit facilities and local purchase options (with a particular focus on construction materials). MG Dowd will also update the Uzbek Minister of Defense on possible further assistance related to their MOD's inventory of Harris radios.

BUTCHER